

1198

Lowenthal, Ward 57

Signed by May Geo George Crook

Aug 1871

The Apache Problem 1871

THE APACHE PROBLEM.

BY BVT. MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE CROOK,
BRIGADIER-GENERAL, U. S. A.

ANY article which treats of the present mode of warfare of the American Indians must necessarily be incomplete without a glance backward at their history. It is important at first to show the conditions which existed at the time the first European settlers established themselves on this continent.

The Indians, who occupied the Atlantic coast of America, were all in a greater or less degree sedentary ; they all lived in villages or collections of huts ; all cultivated the soil and raised maize, and possibly other vegetables and were experts in the chase. The almost trackless forests which then covered the eastern slope of the Appalachian Range were their hunting-grounds. Their arms were exclusively of their own manufacture, bows and arrows, the war-club and the lance, their implements equally of warfare and the chase. As with all other peoples they have been quick to profit by such improvements in weapons of offence as have come to their notice. It is an axiom in the military science that troops with superior weapons can always overcome mere numerical superiority.

These Indians recognized at once the inferiority of their bows and arrows to the fire-arms of the European colonist and for this reason, if no other, as a rule were almost uniformly friendly in their first intercourse with the white settlers ; and it was not until they became convinced that their country would soon be overrun by the new race, that they ventured, as a last resort, to engage in hostilities. These early wars were bloody, but of short duration. The ever pressing forward of the white men made it necessary that the red man should be driven back. One tribe was beaten, often annihilated, and at once their lands were taken and occupied by their victors, and again and again the opera-

tion was repeated. Each year found the frontier advanced and the Indians, or the remnant which remained, as a rule became vagabonds and lingered among the white settlers. They learned easily the vices of the white man but not his virtues.

This, in brief, is the history of the Indian race east of the Mississippi.* Their lands were arable and the constantly increasing tide of settlers occupied them with irresistible force. Several attempts were made by means of formidable confederacies to stem the tide, but though great loss was often inflicted on the colonists, the result was inevitable; civilization always conquers barbarism, and it is a sad commentary on civilization to think that a few scattered remnants are all that now remains of the Indian race who peopled the vast territory east of the Missouri two hundred and fifty years ago.

The red race, driven from the fertile forest and prairie country which until within a few years has been deemed the only region suitable for agriculture, found for many years a secure roaming place west of the Missouri. Their lands were not coveted because their capabilities for cultivation of the cereals were not understood. The forced movement westward, however, had its natural effect upon the Indians. Those dispossessed of their hunting-grounds, east of the great river, either drove the Indians to the westward still farther towards the occident, or were in the clash of tribes annihilated, or in some instances assimilated with the stronger band. The Sioux, under their various names, were unquestionably the strongest of all the tribes between the Mississippi and the Missouri; and when it became necessary for them to cross the Missouri, we find that the tribes occupying the valleys of the Platte, and of the tributary streams farther to the north, suffered from their incursions, until but fragments remain of the powerful tribes, such as the Omahas, the Poncas, the Mandans, Arickarees, etc., who had lived, perhaps, for centuries on the lands which were now needed by their enemies the Sioux. It is probable up to this time the Sioux were sedentary Indians and in common with most of the tribes east of the Missouri raised corn and some kinds of vegetables; but when dispossessed of their homes they became pure nomads and lived almost exclusively on flesh. The buffaloes which roamed in immense herds over the whole of the region they had seized, furnished them food and their skins shelter.

* The forced emigration of many of the tribes of the South Atlantic and Gulf States to the Indian Territory has not been lost sight of.

From this time forward until the discovery of gold in California, their only intercourse with the dominant race was with trappers and traders with whom they lived on friendly terms; the occasional conflicts of detached bands with trapping parties of whites were probably due more to the jealousy of rival trading companies than to any hostility of the Indians against the white intruders. Their habits of warfare continued practically the same; the treeless plains offering no inducement to settled homes; they followed the buffalo in its migration; they did not attempt to build defensive works and their war-like operations were always offensive. They depended on sudden surprises, and if their attack failed, as a rule they disappeared as rapidly as they assembled. Their weapons, though they steadily and perseveringly sought to obtain fire-arms and did obtain many though of inferior quality, mainly remained such as they could manufacture themselves. The stone or obsidian arrow-head and lance-point gave place to those made of iron; but they were still conscious of their inferiority in this respect to the white man. The rush overland to California following the discovery of gold, while it undoubtedly led to much bloodshed, did not materially change the friendly relations existing between the Indians of the Great Plains and the whites, and it was not until the tide of immigration following the building of the transcontinental railroad began to press them from their hunting-grounds, and the rapidly diminishing numbers of buffalo endangered their food supply, that they again concluded to measure their strength with the invaders. Their vast superiority in numbers for a time succeeded in setting at defiance the power of the Government, and a treaty was made with them setting aside a reservation for their use, stretching from the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains and causing the abandonment of several military posts. In the meantime the invention of breech-loading fire-arms has made a momentous change in the whole system of military operations, and while it added for a time uncalculated strength to troops, in the course of a few years to a still greater degree added to the difficulties encountered in savage warfare. The muzzle-loading fire-arms were scarcely more to be feared in the hands of Indians than the bow and arrow, since they could not be used to advantage on horseback. But when the Indians began to get the breech-loading arms and the fixed ammunition, their tactics and whole system of warfare were changed. Instead of attacks, like a whirlwind upon detached

parties, they changed their methods and in secure retreats awaited onsets. From an offensive warfare exclusively they adopted a system of offensive-defensive operations. The result was manifested in the fight on the Little Big Horn, in which General Custer was killed and the greater portion of his command of regular soldiers annihilated. The advantages resulting to the Indians of the Great Plains, from the possession of the new arms and ammunition, were lessened by the fact that they had large herds of horses which owing to the physical condition of the country could be followed and captured, leaving them on foot ; and being essentially mounted Indians they were at the mercy of their pursuers when dismounted. Then too, the intense cold of northern winters compelled the Indians to go into camps for shelter, and these camps could be located and attacked by troops, as instanced by the surprise of the Piegons, in Montana, the Sioux under Crazy Horse in Dakota, and the Cheyennes under Roman Nose in Wyoming.

But though all these various conditions and the successful attacks upon them must have convinced the Indians of the ultimate superiority of the white man, there was no disposition shown to abandon the struggle, and it became apparent to thinking soldiers that other means must be sought to secure the pacification of the formidable tribes, such as the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arrapahoes. This end was attained by enlisting Indians as soldiers, or rather to be more precise, as scouts. Large numbers were armed and organized under intelligent, active, and brave officers. The Indians finding that their own people were being used against them, gave up the fight, as they knew that the result was inevitable ; and to-day the whole of those powerful tribes are quiet and will probably so remain unless driven again upon the war-path by the greed of the white man. The danger from this source may be instanced, from the threatening demeanor of the Cheyennes and Arrapahoes during the past summer, the outbreak of which tribes was probably prevented by the wise and skilful adjustment of their grievances.

The mode of warfare, of the Indians occupying the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, is in many respects as dissimilar from that of their brothers living on the Plains to the east of the continental divide as in the physical character of the country in which they live. In a paper of this nature it is hardly necessary to consider the fish-eating Indians of the Columbia, as their

numbers and present condition practically preclude the possibility of their ever becoming a source of trouble to the Government, so far as warlike operation are concerned ; and the limits of this article will not admit even a passing reference to the Bannocks, Shoshones, and their southern cousins, the Utes ; the more especially as the prominent characteristics of the Mountain Indians, as compared with the Indians of the Plains, are exhibited in a greater degree in the Apaches, who are to-day the representative Indians of America, so far as ferocity, courage, cunning, and skill in savage warfare are concerned.

The country these Indians occupy and which in event of hostilities is subject to their raids, consists of the territories of Arizona, and New Mexico, Northwestern Texas, and the states of Chihuahua, and Sonora in Mexico. At times their raids have been extended to the states of Durango, and Sonora, and as far to the west as the Pacific Ocean.

It is the roughest portion of the continent, and it is impossible for persons not acquainted with it from personal inspection to form any correct idea of its rugged mountains and arid plains. The character of these Indians is such as might be expected under such surroundings. The constant struggle with adverse conditions, with hunger, with exposure to extremes of heat and cold, and to danger of every kind kills in infancy the weak and sickly children ; only the strong, perfectly developed child survives. Consequently the adult Apache is an embodiment of physical endurance—lean, well proportioned, medium sized, with sinews like steel, insensible to hunger, fatigue, or physical pains, the Apache warrior resembles as little the well-fed Indian of the eastern reservations, as does the hungry wolf the sleek house-dog.

Greatly as the invention of breech-loading arms and fixed ammunition has changed the nature of war with all Indian tribes, with the Apaches it has added to the difficulties to be contended against and overcome to an almost incredible extent. Each individual represents, in his own personality, the effect of generations of warfare and blood-shed. His own nature differs but little from the wolf or coyote, and from his earliest infancy he has been accustomed to defend himself against enemies as cruel and revengeful as his own nature. They are no longer our inferiors in equipment. Their weapons of even ten years ago have given place to the best arms of the best makers. Like the coyote

he is perfectly at home, anywhere in the immense country over which he roams and which affords him all the sustenance he requires. Even in his rapid flights he gets a rabbit here or a rat there, and this, with the wild roots and the mescal, gives him all the food he needs. It is, therefore, unnecessary for him to carry provisions. They have no property which they cannot carry on their backs in their most rapid marches ; nor have they, when on the war-path, any settled habitations of any kind, and their temporary resting-places are chosen with the instinct resulting from the experience of generations.

The Apache can endure fatigue and fasting and can live without water for periods that would kill the hardest mountaineer. Every thing he has ever received from the white man is a luxury which he can do without as he has done from time immemorial.

From these preliminaries an idea can be formed of the labors and dangers to be encountered in fighting the Apaches, and yet it is only by actual experience that these difficulties can be appreciated. In fighting them we must of necessity be the pursuers, and unless we can surprise them by sudden and unexpected attack, the advantage is all in their favor. In Indian combats it must be remembered that you rarely see an Indian ; you see the puff of smoke and hear the whiz of his bullets, but the Indian is thoroughly hidden in the rocks and even his exact hiding-place can only be conjectured. The soldier on the contrary must expose himself, and exposure is fatal. A dozen Indians in the rocks can withstand the onset of a battalion of soldiers, and though they can be driven from their position at the cost of many lives in the attacking party, it only results in their attaining another position equally as strong as the first, or in their scattering like quail in the rocks, to appear at some point miles away, in front, on either flank, or in rear, as may seem to them desirable. The Apaches only fight with regular soldiers when they choose and when the advantages are all on their side. If pursued to their rocky strongholds, they send their families to some other point beyond immediate reach of danger, while the bucks absolutely without impedimenta swarm your column, avoid, or attack, as their interests dictate, dispute every foot of your advance, harass your rear and surround you on all sides. Under such conditions regular troops are as helpless as a whale attacked by a school of sword-fish. The tendency of military drill and discipline is to make the individual soldier a machine, dependent upon the

officer in command for its movement and action, and upon cohesion with its fellow machines for its efficiency. His individuality is completely lost in his organization and he therefore cannot compete on equal terms with an enemy whose individuality under all circumstances is perfect. In operating against them the only hope of success lies in using their own methods, and with the above facts in view, it must be evident that to successfully operate against them a partial tribal disintegration must take place, and that a portion of the tribe must be arrayed against the other. Acting upon this principle was due the success attending operations against them in 1872 and 1873, which resulted in placing over 5,000 of them on the White Mountain Reservation. The application of the same methods settled the Sioux troubles in 1876-77.

In this connection it may not be amiss to describe the measures which I first employed in making this valuable auxiliary force useful in Indian campaigns. The first difficulty was in overcoming the prejudices of army officers to commands of this character and securing men properly qualified for such duty. The officers secured, I selected Indians for enlistment. There are negative characters among Indians as among white men, and the nearer an Indian approaches to the savage state the more likely he will prove valuable as a soldier. I therefore selected, preferably, the wildest that I could get. They were organized in companies of convenient size. To give the scouts confidence positive orders were given that they should only be used to discover the locations of the hostile rancherias, and when discovered, such dispositions should be made that under no circumstances should any of the scouts be injured in the fight. Within a short period the scouts became so encouraged that their efficiency was greatly improved and at times they suffered severe loss without demoralization. In organizing Indian scouts too much attention cannot be given to the selection of the officers who are to command. The American Indian cares very little about our idea of rank. Efficiency, and efficiency only, is what he looks for in the man who is to lead him on the war-path. Their leaders necessarily have to be of the best physique, in robust health, capable of enduring great fatigue, of undisputed courage, of great patience, good judgment and discretion. The commanders of Indian scouts have therefore, as a rule, been selected from the younger officers, whose health is still unimpaired and whose ambition is

a guiding motive, rather than from officers of more experience, upon whose vigor and energy the effects of long service have begun to tell. The scouts are not mounted. The Apache is a foot Indian, capable of making from forty to sixty miles a day in this rough mountainous country. Horses would be useless, as it would be impossible to keep them in remounts on such service. Supplies cannot be carried, except by pack-trains. The organization and management of these is a matter to which too much care and thought cannot be given.

No opinion can be more fallacious or dangerous than the idea which seemed to have obtained with some officers, that the pack-train is merely a secondary consideration, a something which can be beaten and hammered along the trail "by the labor troops." An efficient pack-train is, next to Indian scouts, an important adjunct in this warfare. To detail soldiers to manage it entails upon them extra labor of the severest kind, and duties of which some of them at least must be ignorant; and as a consequence the animals suffer, and become sore and worn out. An experience of more than thirty years convinces me that a pack-train can only be efficient when composed of mules expressly selected and used solely for that purpose.

The packers should be civilians, hired and paid liberally as such.

In further explanation of the method of Apache warfare, I cannot do better than refer to an incident of the present operations against the Chiricahua Apaches.

Early in November, a party of eleven hostile Chiricahuas crossed the border and went up into New Mexico. At that time every point along the line which afforded sufficient water for a troop of cavalry, was guarded, and the country between was constantly patrolled. The Chiricahuas finding that their water-holes were guarded changed their usual tactics, and avoiding them, made their passage in the most difficult points of the mountains. They are not dependent upon the water-holes for waters, but can go one hundred miles without halting, carrying such water as they need for themselves in the entrails of cattle or horses killed by the way, and abandoning the animals they ride when these drop exhausted by thirst or fatigue.

The soldiers in pursuit have each but one horse. When any of their horses or pack-mules gives out from any cause, the command is not only weakened by such loss, but extra work is im-

posed upon the poor beasts which are still able to stagger on their feet.

The Chiricahuas secured a remount at ranches on their route, and at the end of a march, of one hundred miles, were possibly in possession of fresher and better animals than when they started.

They push across the valleys by night and remain hidden by day in the rocky places and high points of the mountains, from which they can watch the surrounding country, note the approach of pursuers and lie in ambush for them, or scatter like coyotes to come together again at a place known only to themselves. No human wisdom or foresight can predict exactly where that is to be; it may be in the original direction of their line of march, on one or both flanks, or they may whip around and appear far in the rear of their pursuers.

To follow them, only one thing can be done,—the trail must be stuck to and never lost, if possible. The Apaches may retard pursuit or baffle it completely in either one of the ways indicated; and it has happened during the present campaign that our faithful Apache scouts have slowly and patiently led the troops for twenty miles over rocky stretches, where a white man could not detect the faintest indication of a trail, until, upon reaching more favorable ground, the unerring sagacity of the scouts was attested.

The country contains many rough places where a dozen men, armed, as the Chiricahuas are, with breech-loading guns, could hold a brigade in check.

In approaching these the commander of a detachment of troops has to choose between taking the precautions necessary to guard against the surprise and probable destruction of his men, which will make his own progress slow and give the hostiles so much greater advantage in time and distance, or he must assume the risk with all its consequences. When night comes, the command must halt and wait for the coming of dawn to enable it to resume the pursuit; in the meantime the raiders have put miles between them and the soldiers. This was the state of the case with the band of raiders here spoken of, as explained above. They succeeded in eluding our troops and passing the line; but word of their in-coming was telegraphed to all points, and detachments were pushed out to intercept or to follow them. Troops in front were placed in ambush at every available point which it was thought possibly might be in the

line of route. Every conceivable effort was made and artifice employed which an experience of a generation of Indian wars could suggest. They were very closely pursued, but having no impedimenta of any kind, they dashed through comparatively well-settled districts, murdering and plundering with grim impartiality citizens, soldiers, and friendly Indians. Their very feebleness of number made them all the more dangerous, as it rendered it so much the more difficult for people to know they were in any particular vicinity, until they had surrounded a ranch or ambushed some unwary traveller. The pursuit was never relaxed, and at all times parties were on the trail or moving to intercept them. But, although the party was so closely followed that twice they were compelled to abandon their horses and plunder and take to the rocks on foot, and in their next flight left no more trail than so many birds, they finally crossed back into Mexico with no loss that can be positively stated beyond one of their number killed by the friendly Apaches near Fort Apache.

For months the statement has been industriously disseminated by interested parties that the Apache scouts were untrustworthy, that they had mutinied, and every thing of that kind. But in none of these reports is there a spark of truth. The Apache scouts, for this class of warfare, are as worthy of trust as any soldiers in the world, and in all the experience I have had with them they have proved themselves energetic, reliable, truthful, and honest.

It has now, no doubt, been made sufficiently clear how and why the savages of the rocky, barren mountains of the Pacific-coast region have been such a thorn in the side of civilization; that while their fellows of the Atlantic coast and Missouri valley were no doubt vastly richer, yet these very riches placed them at a disadvantage, as they had to move slowly to protect their herds, which always left great trails, easily followed; and in winter their camp had to have some permanency to keep horses and families from freezing to death, and were, therefore, located on the bank of some stream which would afford shelter and food for their animals.

The Apache has had the climate even in his favor, and has never been obliged to go into camp on account of the severity of the seasons. He has absolutely no impedimenta of any kind, having no baggage that he cannot pack about on his back, and no horses so dear to him that he would not rather eat them than

not; no enemy so alert that signal smokes will not announce his coming the moment he approaches the mountains. After that the Apaches fight or not, as they please; but if they fight, it is always on ground of their own choosing and with every point in their favor.

Such were the Apaches, and such the condition of their country when first I assumed command of Arizona in 1871. With many misgivings I set about the attempt of reducing them to peace and quiet. At first the task seemed hopeless. The Apaches were cut up in small bands, each independent of its neighbors, and united only in the slender bonds of language, and of hatred and contempt of the whites.

It was necessary for me to go from band to band, from man to man, in the hope of being able to distinguish the good from the bad, the reclaimable from the depraved and treacherous.

I saw that the key-note of the problem lay in my success or failure to win to my side the boldest, most daring, most savage of all the young chiefs. These men are the high-mettled horses of the herd, the born leaders who, if once curbed and broken, help in the management of the negative spirits in all communities.

The Apaches had such a deep-seated distrust of all Americans that four points of policy at once obtruded themselves. First, to make them no promises that could not be fulfilled. Second, to tell them the exact truth at all times. Third, to keep them at labor and to find remuneration for that labor. Fourth, to be patient, to be just, and to fear not. The greatest of these was the question of compensated labor. No sermon on the dignity of labor could prove so eloquent an appeal to the dormant better-nature of the Apaches as the disclosure of the fact that one hundred pounds of hay was worth one dollar at the quartermaster's corral. To show him that the labor of his squaws and children was worth money was soon followed by the teaching that more money could be made if he added his labor to theirs. At large posts like Camp Apache there is a steady demand for every pound of hay the Apaches can put in; but there is also a cry for fuel for the troops and grain for the horses. We are taking the Apache by the hand and quietly teaching him the use of the axe and the plow. He is receiving his first money earned by the honest sweat of his brow. What shall he do with it? "Put it into cattle; they graze on your hill-sides and grow in value while you sleep."

The Apache is becoming a property-owner. It is property won by his own toil, and he thrills at once with the pride of acquisition and the anxiety of possession. He is changing both inside and out: exteriorly, he is dressed in the white man's garb, wholly or in part; he has n't so much time for gaudy ornamentation, and indulges less in beads, feathers, and paint. Mentally he is counting the probable value of his steers and interested in knowing how much of his corn crop the quartermaster may want next month.

He is receiving his education. Education is progress. Progress and vagabondage cannot exist in the same village. The Apache who owns ten or a dozen cows becomes a man of power; his opinions are heard with respect and his decisions sought in the disputes of his neighbors. He sees that he has gained an influence greater than that of warriors or medicine men and it is gratifying to know that his prosperity instead of exciting envy has encouraged emulation. In this sketch I have tried to make clear the guiding principles by which the Apaches have been pursued in war and handled in peace; in both I can truthfully claim some experience, and with equal truth I can assert that the greed and rapacity of the vultures who fatten on Indian wars have been a greater obstruction in the path of civilization than the ferocity of the wildest savages who have fought them.

Man is at all times the creature of his surroundings. Place him in the cultivated circles of the older States, no matter what may be his color or race, his nature becomes softened and refined, the angles are rounded, his manner and language become gentle and polished. Place him on the desert or on the mountain-top, force him to struggle with the elements, to contend for existence with the wild animals which surround him—and he degenerates rapidly into an equality with these animals. Like them he develops keenness of vision, sharpness of hearing, stealthiness of tread. He learns to bear without complaint hunger, thirst, fatigue. Excessive heat is familiar to him, and extorts no more complaint than does the excessive cold which follows it. To cross over steep, rocky mountains,—to swim swift rivers, are incidents merely in a career which is a never-ceasing struggle for the preservation of the dubious boon of life. It is in such a struggle that we should look for the survival of the fittest, and it is in just such a struggle we find it;—acuteness of sense, perfect physical condition, absolute knowledge of locality,

almost absolute ability to preserve oneself from danger, let it come from what source it may.

We have before us the tiger of the human species.

To no tribe in America can these remarks apply with more force than to the Apaches of Arizona. To see them, as they first appeared to the white men,—half clad, half fed, covered with vermin, with no semblance of property beyond the rude arms with which they doggedly waged war against unpitying nature, it was easy to believe, and many Americans did believe, that nothing could be more easily affected than their extermination or subjection. It has taken the expenditure of countless treasure and blood to demonstrate that these naked Indians were the most thoroughly individualized soldiers on the globe; that each was an army in himself, waiting for orders from no superiors—thoroughly confident in his own judgment, and never at a loss to know when to attack or when to retreat.

The Apache can be compared most aptly to the wild animal he fittingly calls his cousin—the coyote. The civilized settlements are his sheep-folds, and even supposing that a toilsome campaign results in destroying forty out of a band of fifty, the survivors are as much to be dreaded as ever, until the very last one can be run down, killed, or got under control, and taught to labor for his bread.

In one brief sentence I may embody the idea that man is more or less savage according to the certainty with which his food may be obtained, and that, all things being equal, the difficulty of subjecting any given race or people will be in the inverse ratio of its food supply. Those tribes which have the largest accumulations of food and clothing will in nearly every case fight desperately for the preservation of their villages; but these villages once destroyed their power is broken and they soon sue for peace.

But where man raises no harvests, dries no fish, preserves no meat, lives simply from hand to mouth, the trouble in effecting his capture becomes immeasurably greater, and after he has been provided with improved breech-loaders he is transformed into a foe of the most dangerous character within human knowledge.

George Brook
U.S.A.

A NEW STUDY ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF ARTILLERY IN PLANNED OFFENSIVE BATTLES.*

Translated from the German.

BY FIRST-LIEUTENANT JOHN P. WISSER,

FIRST ARTILLERY.

INTRODUCTION.

IN mathematics, by substituting special values in infinite series, representing general laws, we often obtain simple special equations. But the inverse is not always true; a general law cannot, as a rule, be derived from a special case. Similarly, in tactics, in the relation of battles to engagements of detachments.

By placing a number of detachment engagements side by side, we cannot build up the planned battle. But from the lessons taught by the planned battle, those regarding detachment engagements may be deduced; it is only necessary to substitute the proper relations of space and time in the latter. The investigation of the relations of the various parts of the battle is therefore useful in the study of division and detachment engagements.

Seven years ago the author published in his "Tactics of Field Artillery," views on the use of artillery in the planned offensive battles. Since then domestic and foreign literature has produced many different views on the use of artillery in offensive battles. The object of this lecture is to elucidate the most important of these views and at the same time to make additions to the work above referred to.

The positive propositions set forth in the lecture are not in-

*A lecture delivered to the Military Society at Posen, February 11, 1882, by Hoffbauer, Lieutenant-Colonel and Commandant of the Posen, Field Artillery Regiment, No. 20, Berlin, 1882.